(d) whether State Government has proposed to give free land in this regard; and

(e) the action taken by Government thereon?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI SHARAD YADAV): (a) to (c) Operators are free to connect any routes/places in their commercial judgement subject to compliance with the Route Dispersal Guidelines which provide for certain minimum operations in specified category of routes.

(d) and (e) Yes, Sir, State Government of Punjab has allotted land free of cost to Airports Authority of India (AAI) for the development of Amritsar Airport to International Airport standards. The upgradation of Amritsar Airport would be undertaken in phases consistent with traffic requirements.

Losses in IA and AI

450. SHRI PREM CHAND GUPTA: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that both Indian Airlines and Air India have been making sustained losses for the last three to four years;

(b) whether it is also a fact that there have been increasing complaints about the poor quality of the product being offered by these two airlines; and

(c) if so, what action Government is taking in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI SHARAD YADAV): (a) While Indian Airlines has earned profits in the last three years, Air India incurred losses during the last four years.

(b) and (c) In the case of Indian Airlines there is a decline in the number of complaints received in the year 1999 as compared to the year 1998. Several steps are being taken by Air India to improve the product such as (i) separate check-in counters for all class passengers; (ii) facility of tele check-in for first class passengers; (iii) facility of pre-selecting a seat; (iv) facility of through check-on code-share flights; (v) facility of worldwide baggage tracing service;

(vi) compensation for lost/damaged baggage in line with the leading airlines of the world; (vii) computerised check-in atmost Indian airports. (viii) launching of a joint frequent flyer programme called the "Flying Returns" in June 1994 which enables the members to accure/redeem the mileage points for their travel on both the airlines.

Revival of Silchar-Guwahati-Silchar-Agartala Air Service

451. SHRI KARNENDU BHATTACHARJEE: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that air services between Silchar-Guwahati-Silchar-Agartala were stopped long ago;

(b) whether the Task Force constituted by the Civil Aviation Ministry has recommended to re-start both the services in the interest of public but no action has so far been taken; and

(c) if so, the reasons for not implementing the recommendations of the Task Force or whether Government is taking any step for the re-start of the above services?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI SHARAD YADAV): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) In para 5.3.4.13 of its Report, the Task Force had observed that "As regards air linkages, the State Authorities and local Representatives impressed upon the need for Silchar to be linked to Calcutta and Guwahati on a daily basis. Also the Airlink between Silchar and Agartala needs to be re-introduced." Operation of this service, depends on commercial viability and operators are free to operate any route in their commercial judgement subject to compliance with the Route Disposal Guidelines which provide for certain minimum operations in specified category of routes.